

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent is set forth in the appended claims:

1. A system for monitoring usage of a utility at a location remote from a utility company supplying the utility, said system comprising:
  - a) a meter reading module for determining an amount of usage at the remote location and generating a data signal indicative of the determined amount of usage; and
  - b) a communication device located at the remote location connected to said meter reading module and connectable to the internet for receiving and storing the data signal from said meter reading module and transmitting the data signal to the central location, wherein the central location is able to communicate with said communication device via the internet for receiving the data signal from said communication device and determining an amount of usage of the utility.

2. The system as recited in Claim 1, wherein said meter reading module is connected to said communication device via one of a hardwired connection, X-10 technology or sent over existing telephone lines at a frequency that does not interfere with other regular telephone communications.

3. The system as recited in Claim 2, wherein said hardwired connection is formed by existing electric wiring at the remote location.

4. The system as recited in Claim 2, wherein said X10 technology is wireless.

5. The system as recited in Claim 1, wherein said communications device is a personal computer.

6. The system as recited in Claim 1, wherein the central location includes a processor for analyzing the data signal, generating a bill based upon a determined amount of usage and transmitting the bill to said communication device in the form of one of an e-mail message, Internet browser or other Internet related technologies.

7. The system as recited in Claim 1, wherein said meter reading module is connected to one of an electrical, gas or water meter.

8. The system as recited in Claim 7, further comprising an encoder device connected between said meter reading module and said gas meter.

9. The system as recited in Claim 7, further comprising an encoder device connected between said meter reading module and said water meter.

10. The system as recited in Claim 1, further comprising a plurality of meter reading modules, each of said plurality of meter reading modules reading a respective meter for determining utility usage within a respective residence at the remote location.

11. The system as recited in Claim 6, wherein payment of the bill received from the processor is payable from said communication device at the remote location.

12. The system as recited in Claim 12, wherein payment of the bill by said communication device at the remote location is performed automatically over the Internet via online banking protocols or other internet related payment technologies.

13. A method of monitoring usage of a utility at a location remote from a utility company supplying the utility, said method comprising the steps of:

a) connecting a meter reading module to a utility meter;

- b) connecting the meter reading module to a communication device located at the remote location;
- c) reading the meter by the meter reading module;
- d) determining an amount of usage at the remote location;
- e) generating a data signal indicative of the determined usage by the meter reading module;
- f) providing the data signal to the communication device located at the remote location for eventual transmission to the central location.

14. The method as recited in Claim 13, further comprising the step of transmitting the data signal to the central location via an internet communication.

15. The method as recited in Claim 14, wherein the communication device stores the data signal from said meter reading module within a buffer therein prior to transmission to the central location for transmission.

16. The method as recited in Claim 13, wherein said step of connecting the meter reading module to the communication device is performed via one of a hardwired connection, X-10 technology or sent over existing telephone lines at a frequency that does not interfere with other regular telephone communications.

17. The method as recited in Claim 16, wherein the hardwired connection is formed by existing electric wiring at the remote location.

18. The method as recited in Claim 16, wherein said X10 technology is wireless.

19. The method as recited in Claim 13, wherein the communications device is a personal computer.

20. The method as recited in Claim 18, further comprising the step of generating a bill at the central location based upon a determined amount of usage.

21. The method as recited in Claim 20, further comprising the step of transmitting the bill to the communication device in the form of one of an e-mail message, Internet browser or other Internet related technologies.

22. The method as recited in Claim 13, wherein said step of connecting the meter reading module connects the meter reading module one of an electrical, gas or water meter.

23. The method as recited in Claim 22, further comprising the step of connecting an encoder device between the meter reading module the gas meter.

24. The method as recited in Claim 22, further comprising the step of connecting an encoder device between the meter reading module the water meter.

25. The method as recited in Claim 13, wherein said step of connecting the meter reading module connects a plurality of meter reading modules to a respective one of a plurality of meters for determining utility usage within a respective residence at the remote location.

26. The method as recited in Claim 20, further comprising the step of paying the generated bill received from the central location from the communication device at the remote location.

27. The method as recited in Claim 26, wherein said step of paying the bill is performed automatically over the Internet via online banking protocols or other internet related payment technologies.